



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
JUDICIAL BRANCH**

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

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**Testimony of Stephen N. Ment
Judiciary Committee Public Hearing
March 26, 2009**

**Senate Bill 646, An Act Excluding Sexual Assault And Other Violent
Crime Victims From Jury Service in Certain Criminal Cases**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, on behalf of the Judicial Branch, on Senate Bill 646, *An Act Excluding Sexual Assault and Other Violent Crime Victims from Jury Service in Certain Criminal Cases*. We are opposed to this bill.

At the outset, the Judicial Branch recognizes that jury service for certain individuals can be difficult and even traumatic. We would respectfully note, though, that safeguards already exist in law and practice, making this costly bill unnecessary.

For example, judges are available during jury introduction and the voir dire process and can excuse individuals for any given case. In addition, even prior to appearing, prospective jurors may apply for and be granted a disqualification for medical reasons.

Turning to the bill itself, it would permit prospective jurors to be excused from serving as a juror on a criminal case if they identify themselves as a victim of a sexual assault or other violent crime and the Jury Administrator verifies that status. However, it does not address how verification would occur. We anticipate that it would place a significant burden on our Jury Administration, since more than half a million citizens are summoned annually; we could not accommodate this burden without additional resources.

Furthermore, the bill does not take into account that the Jury Administrator has no way of knowing what cases are scheduled in a particular judicial district on any given day. Thus, it would be impossible for her to ensure that a prospective juror

would be voir dired for civil matters only. Again, even if this proposal was feasible – and we don't believe that it is – significant additional staff would be required to implement it.

Given that the safeguards mentioned above are in place – and that the bill places an administrative burden on the judiciary in these difficult financial times – we would respectfully request that the committee not take favorable action on this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.